

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE**Form Approved**
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Washington Headquarters Service, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.

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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 30-04-2010		2. REPORT TYPE Master of Military Studies Research Paper		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) September 2009 - April 2010	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Institutionalizing a United States Marine Corps Approach to Culture				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER N/A	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER N/A	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER N/A	
6. AUTHOR(S) McLean, Brian D.				5d. PROJECT NUMBER N/A	
				5e. TASK NUMBER N/A	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER N/A	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) USMC Command and Staff College Marine Corps University 2076 South Street Quantico, VA 22134-5068				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER N/A	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) N/A	
				11. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER N/A	
12. DISTRIBUTION AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES N/A					
14. ABSTRACT Since 2003, the United States Marine Corps has drawn on its small wars experiences in the Banana Wars and Vietnam to increase its effectiveness in the current irregular warfare fight. Training and education changes have increased deploying Marines' ability to understand and interact with Iraqi and Afghan locals. Other changes, including the establishment of the Center for Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL), have led to broader culture-related perspectives and skills for individual Marines. Despite the significant progress made so far, the Marine Corps needs to take additional steps to make its approach to culture more coherent, effective, and applicable beyond Iraq and Afghanistan.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS culture, language, operational culture, cross-cultural competency, culture general, culture specific, training, education, doctrine, security cooperation, irregular warfare, counterinsurgency. MCIA, CAOCL					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 20	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Marine Corps University / Command and Staff College
a. REPORT Unclass	b. ABSTRACT Unclass	c. THIS PAGE Unclass			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code) (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office)

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:

INSTITUTIONALIZING A UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS APPROACH TO
OPERATIONAL CULTURE

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank several people whose time and assistance were invaluable in helping me understand how different organizations throughout the Marine Corps view and deal with cultural issue. My research would not have been possible without the insights and background provided by these individuals, who include: Dr. Charles McKenna, Dr. Paula Holmes-Eber, Dr. Kerry Foshier, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Sinicrope, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Welborn, and my thesis mentor, Dr. Francis Marlo. I would also like to thank my wife, Jennifer, whose seemingly limitless patience and keen editing skills were second only to the moral support she provided me. Any errors in fact, analysis, or format are mine alone.

Executive Summary

Title: Institutionalizing a United States Marine Corps Approach to Operational Culture

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Thesis: Although the Marine Corps has made significant progress toward incorporating culture into planning and operations, additional steps must be taken to improve and institutionalize the Marine Corps approach to culture.

Discussion: The Marine Corps has significant experience conducting irregular warfare including counterinsurgency operations, from the Banana Wars of the early 20th century to the Vietnam War, and now in Iraq and Afghanistan. During the 20th century operations, Marines recognized and documented the need to understand the culture and language of the people among whom the Marines lived and fought. Marines fighting in the Long War, particularly in Iraq from 2004 on, had to relearn that lesson. Based on recent experiences, and building upon success in Latin America in the first half of the last century and in Southeast Asia more than thirty years ago, the Marine Corps has joined—and in many cases, led the way for—Department of Defense efforts to incorporate culture and language training as part of a baseline capability for the general purpose force. These efforts go beyond language training for experts and cultural familiarization as part of relatively last-minute pre-deployment training. The Marine Corps has undertaken a range of initiatives to incorporate culture and foreign language into training and education, planning, and operations. The character of current operations in Afghanistan and those Marines are most likely to conduct in the next fifteen years both drive and validate those initiatives. The progress to date, however, is imperfect. There is currently not a coherent Marine Corps approach to culture which is consistently incorporated throughout professional military education, doctrine, and reference publications. The early efforts toward including culture in planning and operations were an important first step; standardizing and codifying the mental models and grammar Marines use to understand and apply culture are the critical next step.

Conclusion: Since 2004, the Marine Corps has made significant and necessary changes addressing a lack of culture-related knowledge and skills which have been identified as critical to success in the Long War. Those changes, while generally effective, do not constitute a coherent Marine Corps-wide approach to culture. Standardization and codification of an overall Marine Corps approach will facilitate that approach's institutionalization and implementation, resulting in a Marine Corps that is more capable across the range of military operations.

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During the Cold War and its immediate aftermath, many believed that foreign language skills and regional expertise were only required by a very small segment of the force, usually serving in fairly specialized jobs. Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM underscored the need, and provided the impetus, for both cultural awareness and enhanced pre-deployment language preparation.

House Armed Services Committee report, 2008¹

Since the terrorist attacks against the U.S. homeland on September 11, 2001, it has become increasingly clear that the security environment has changed. Although the nature of war is unchanging², the character of conflicts in which the Marine Corps has found itself operating during the Long War is different than that of conflicts which dominated Marine Corps doctrine and training in the 1990s.

Although the Marine Corps has drawn upon its institutional experiences in irregular warfare, the duration and complexity of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan—combined with estimates of other challenges likely to face Marines in the near to mid-future—have required institutional change beyond a renewed application of lessons learned in the 1920s or 1960s.

This paper will advance the premise that although the Marine Corps has

Irregular warfare (IW), which includes the majority of Marine Corps operations in Iraq and Afghanistan since early 2004, is nothing new to the nation or to the Marine Corps. In the period between the two world wars, Marines were deployed almost continuously to Central and Latin America for a series of so-called banana wars or small wars; that is to say, Marines were engaged in irregular warfare and one of its subsets, counterinsurgency. Marines again conducted irregular warfare in Vietnam, attempting to counter the Viet Cong communist insurgents while simultaneously fighting more conventionally against the regular army of North Vietnam. made significant progress toward incorporating culture into planning and operations,

additional steps must be taken to improve and institutionalize the Marine Corps approach to culture.

II. Lessons Relearned; Laying the Foundation

*"The Marines deploying to Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 were as poorly trained in cultural intelligence and cultural terrain as their counterparts in Somalia or even 1920s Nicaragua."*³

*Major Ben Connable, USMC
Middle East Foreign Area Officer*

For the Marine Corps, the Long War began shortly after the September 11 attacks with the establishment and deployment of Task Force 58 into Afghanistan in late 2001. Since then, the Marine Corps has moved from a superficial and reactionary approach to culture to a greater appreciation of culture's impacts on operations. The first area of significant change was predeployment training for Marines heading to Iraq. In preparation for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), pre-deployment training in 2003 included only very a limited treatment of Iraqi culture and language. The focus of the training was a handful of tactically useful phrases in the Iraqi dialect of Arabic combined with a list of "*dos and do nots*" to avoid offending Iraqis (i.e., never shake hands or eat with your left hand, and don't talk to women). This initial round of culture training was not standardized, and was typically arranged by commanders and their staffs at division to battalion levels; as a result, it imposed an additional burden and the training varied from unit to unit.⁴

As I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) prepared to return to Iraq in late 2003 and early 2004 for the second of what would become a six-year series of Marine Corps unit rotations to Al Anbar Province, the predeployment training program (PTP) benefitted from the recent experiences of I MEF Marines. Focusing on more specific and

contemporary cultural factors in western Iraq, the PTP not only provided more useful knowledge but provided opportunities for Marines to apply that knowledge using role players and interactive scenarios at venues including the Mojave Viper training exercise.⁵ By 2008, distance learning tools to support cultural elements of PTP included the free use of Rosetta Stone, a brand of commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) language training software. Although the COTS software was not intended to meet specific PTP requirements, 15 of the 31 languages and dialects initially available to Marines were “considered operationally relevant”.⁶

Whereas the cultural elements of PTP were expanded and improved very rapidly, changes within the Marine Corps education system were slower in coming. Officer professional military education (PME) benefitted from Marines’ direct experiences in Iraq as did the PTP, but updates to PME occurred within the context of more formal processes for curriculum changes which are necessarily less responsive to feedback from the field than PTP. This challenge notwithstanding, officer PME—particularly resident PME programs in Quantico—changed to prepare Marine officers better for the operational environment in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Curriculum changes at Marine Corps Command and Staff College (CSC) are illustrative of the broader changes in officer PME. Colonel John Toolan, who had served as the commander officer for Regimental Combat Team 1 (RCT-1) in Iraq, became the director of CSC in the fall of 2004. Building on his experiences in and around Fallujah earlier that year and guided by his superiors (including his former Division commanding general, Lieutenant General James Mattis), Colonel Toolan led the first major curriculum change at the school in nearly 15 years. The previous revision was a result of the

Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 and the Department of Defense's move toward jointness mandated by that act; the revision instituted in 2005 was driven not by legislation but operational experiences and necessity.⁷

Based on the results of an operational planning team (OPT) which Colonel Toolan convened at Marine Corps University (MCU) in early 2005, the curriculum for academic year 2005-2006 included a new emphasis on culture throughout the year and Arabic language training for every student. The culture component of the curriculum was grouped with education on the organization, cultures and capabilities of other U.S. government agencies and packaged as a line of operation under the label "culture and interagency operations" (CIAO). The CIAO course added another lens through which students at CSC study military history, lending to broad applicability rather than culture-specific expertise.⁸

In contrast, the language training was deliberately focused on continuing Marine Corps deployments to Iraq; initially, Arabic was the only language taught. Arabic classes were tied to a course in negotiation skills, linking skills in a foreign language to the act of communicating with someone from a foreign culture—one of the elements of cross-cultural competence, which will be discussed later in greater detail.

As the Marine Corps approach to culture and language shifted from the immediate challenges in Iraq to broader issues of developing cross-cultural competence, the character of training changed. A reflection of that change was the broadening of language training at CSC, which offered languages including French, Chinese, and Korean starting in 2007. With the shift of Marine forces from Iraq to Afghanistan, the most popular language choice by students in academic year 2009-2010 was Pashto. The

school also offered Urdu while Iraqi Arabic remained an option. The range of languages currently being taught at CSC supports cultural studies of areas in which Marines are currently operating or likely to operate (Arabic, Pashto, Urdu, French), as well as areas where major conventional conflicts may occur (Chinese, Korean).⁹

Although changes at CSC were broader in scope due to the college's graduate-level focus on the operational level of war, elements of culture are also now incorporated into the curricula for junior officers' resident PME courses. At Expeditionary Warfare School (EWS), captains receive an overview of cultural considerations from an anthropologist on staff at MCU and use a framework of operational culture to evaluate cultural factors and their impacts during planning exercises.¹⁰ Lieutenants at the Basic School (TBS) receive a single class entitled "Cultural Awareness,"¹¹ teaching the officers the importance of cultural terrain as part of the operating environment. While it lacks the depth of CSC or even EWS culture-related material, the TBS class introduces a framework for evaluating cultural factors.¹²

Lieutenant General Mattis established the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) in mid-2005, which represented a paradigm shift greater than that of the individual changes to predeployment training programs or officer PME curricula. Although the center's initial and necessary focus was improving Iraq-centric PTP, its charter is "to serve as the central Marine Corps agency for operational culture training and operational language familiarization training programs."¹³ As the learning curve for providing effective predeployment training flattened out CAOCL was able to expand its focus to encompass regions beyond Iraq and to advocate for the kinds of

Marine Corps-wide changes that are necessary for a coherent long-term approach to culture and language.¹⁴

Increased emphasis on culture since 2003 has not been limited to the realm of training and education; the Marine Corps intelligence community also made significant changes. Marines and civilians at the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA) might say, with some justification, that MCIA has historically provided “cultural intelligence.”¹⁵ Concurrent with changes in Marine Corps training and education since 2003, the cultural intelligence role of MCIA has been expanded and improved with the addition of social scientists to its staff, increasingly sophisticated training and methods of analysis for culture-related intelligence, and development of useful culture-related products.¹⁶ By 2005, MCIA was designated as the cultural intelligence lead for the Defense Intelligence Agency which manages all human intelligence collections within the Department of Defense; MCIA is now the lead for cultural intelligence within the entire U.S. Intelligence Community (IC).¹⁷

MCIA representatives took part in an IC-wide conference in 2006 which addressed the need for “a new intelligence paradigm” which incorporates social and cultural factors to a much greater degree than was previously the case.¹⁸ In this instance, Marine Corps efforts from 2003-2006 contributed to a broader IC discussion of cultural issues, and that discussion in turn helped inform the direction of MCIA’s continuing efforts to optimize its collection, analysis, and dissemination of operationally useful cultural intelligence.

Another reflection of the increased emphasis on culture within Marine Corps intelligence is MCIA’s publication of the Cultural Generic Information Requirements

Handbook (C-GIRH) in August 2008. This handbook “provides Marines with a foundation to help them begin to understand foreign cultures,” and “gives Marines a mental map for navigating any foreign culture in an expeditionary environment.”¹⁹ The scope of the C-GIRH goes far beyond listing the culture-related questions that need to be answered (at least in part by intelligence), and its annexes include: “four rules of cross-cultural communication”; a description of common mistakes made in cross-cultural interactions; and more than 20 pages describing cross-cultural considerations, which provide a framework for observing, thinking about, and interacting with foreign cultures.²⁰ The publication of the C-GIRH in 2008 served multiple purposes, providing a baseline checklist of culture-related information an intelligence section might be expected to answer for the commander, using vignettes to illustrate the impact culture can have in operations, and presenting a basic framework for understanding and dealing with foreign cultures.

Another recently-created organization, the Marine Corps Information Operations (IO) Center (MCIOC), also incorporates culture into its operations. Established in 2009, MCIOC achieved an initial operating capability in March 2010.²¹ The MCIOC staff includes cultural anthropologists and other civilian experts in fields including media and communications, enhancing the center’s ability to generate and deliver messages to targeted foreign audiences²² and meeting a requirement for subject matter experts with “regional IO target expertise.”²³

III. Requirements and Shortfalls

Deployed joint forces must be capable of understanding and effectively communicating with native populations, local and national government officials, and coalition partners. Lessons learned from OIF and OEF prove that this force-multiplying

capability can save lives and is integral to successful mission accomplishment.

*JP 3-0, Joint Operations*²⁴

To arrive at a conclusion regarding what additional actions are needed to fully institutionalize an effective Marine Corps approach to culture, it is necessary to determine what the characteristics of an effective, institutionalized approach should be. Drawing upon guidance from Marine Corps leadership, direction from other organizations and leaders within the Department of Defense, and research regarding culture and language training, four key questions are: (1) In more precise terms, what is it that Marines need in the way of culture and language appreciation, knowledge, skills, or abilities? (2) Which Marines need these increased capabilities? (3) Beyond training and education, are there other initiatives critical to the institutional culture and language efforts? If so, which are most critical? And, (4) To what extent have the requirements outlined by the answers to the first three questions already been met, and what are the critical remaining shortfalls?

Question 1: What do Marines really need?

There has been an undeniable “cultural turn” within the U.S. military since 2004, with broad recognition of the need for improved understanding of and interaction with indigenous people for counterinsurgency operations, other forms of irregular warfare, and other activities across the range of military operations.²⁵ Effecting those improvements and turning the broad concept into reality remains a significant challenge for the Marine Corps. A range of models or frameworks for culture, cross-cultural communication, and cross-cultural competency exists within the social sciences; several of these have been

used by the U.S. military services at times throughout the last century.²⁶ As a result, there is no self-evident and universally-accepted best way ahead.

Most of the models being considered or implemented by the Services include three basic elements: studying a region, learning a language spoken in that region, and additional culture-related training and education beyond the scope of the specific region and its associated language. As described in one research report, a “long-term solution for building and sustaining cultural capability should address all three components: language, region-specific, and general cross-cultural competence.”²⁷ Each of these components is complex, and all three are interrelated. Understanding the inherent complexities and the appropriate balance and linkages between the three components serves as the foundation for determining the actions needed to implement a comprehensive culture program.

Cross-cultural competence is a complex outcome in itself, including: acquisition of knowledge, translation of that knowledge into action through appropriate behaviors, useful attitudes about diversity, cultural empathy, and self-awareness.²⁸ Language, although by no means simple to learn, is relatively clearly bounded; many Marines have some exposure to foreign language learning, from their families, classes in high school or college, or previous deployments. Region-specific knowledge is roughly analogous to a program of area studies, and at its most basic level resembles history and social studies. An important difference is the intended outcome, cultural empathy which is based on an ability to understand how cultural influences inform local perceptions, actions and reactions. Whereas a foreign area officer (FAO) may attend two years at a full-time school to gain a high level of region-specific knowledge, Marines in the general purpose

force (GPF) will have to gain that knowledge over a career-long program of studies.

The relationship between learning a foreign language and a culture with which the language is associated has been the topic of recent debate within the Department of Defense. The *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap* (DLTR) and Defense Language Program (DLP) seem to indicate that language is the key to improved effectiveness; JP-3 *Joint Operations* reinforces this view, stating that language barriers can be the primary obstacle to coalition operations.²⁹ A 2008 report by the House Armed Services Committee, noting a divergence between the DLTR's guidance and the current approach to culture within each of the military Services, implicitly makes the same point citing one Army staff officer's observations on the relative importance of culture and language:

*If all our soldiers spoke Arabic we could have resolved Iraq in two years. My point is that language is obviously an obstacle to our success, much more so than cultural. Even a fundamental understanding of the language would have had a significant impact on our ability to operate.*³⁰

This view of language as the critical element in culture has come to be known as the "Big L" approach. Academic research, however, suggests that language is only an important element of a broader culture program, cautioning that "foreign language may be one path to...cultural learning, but it is not the gateway."³¹ Discounting the counterfactual element of the Army officer's comments, it is likely true that his soldiers would have been more effective if they had spoken Arabic at even a basic level. That does not, however, mean that an understanding of the cultural context within which Iraqis framed their choices during the insurgency would have been less valuable.

In the "little l" approach, currently favored by all of the Services and supported by research, language is considered as one important element of culture-specific studies.

Even a very basic ability in Arabic, for example, facilitates learning about modern cultures in the Arabic-speaking world. The third element, cross-cultural competence, is the one which least resembles a more deliberate version of culture-specific and operation-specific predeployment training.

Cross-cultural competence, sometimes referred to as CCC or “3C”, is the culture-general element of a long-term approach to culture training and education.³² Although one outcome of having Marines study a specific region and one of its languages is to build a baseline capability for operating in that region, another outcome of the Marine Corps approach to culture must be to create Marines who are able to adapt to any culture, in any region, with the kinds of predeployment culture and language training that Marines deploying to Iraq received after 2005. It is not practical to imagine that the Marine Corps, or anyone else, can accurately predict the regions to which Marines will deploy in the next five years, much less the next fifteen.³³ To illustrate the point, the unexpected diversion of Marines to Grenada in 1984 and Afghanistan in late 2001 left absolutely no time for culture or language training prior to Operation URGENT FURY or the opening stages of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.

Cross-cultural competence contributes to flexibility because it is the most transferrable element of the program; learning one language does not significantly facilitate learning another, and studies of one culture may do little good or even contribute to misperceptions when confronted by another. Culture-general studies, in contrast, will provide Marines with a schema within which to learn their assigned region’s culture and which they can later apply to any other cultures which they have to learn.

Cross-cultural competency is composed of knowledge, skills, and affects. This framework is very similar to knowledge, skills, and attitudes—the three elements transferred to students in the Systems Approach to Training process currently used within Marine Corps formal schools. Knowledge must include awareness of a Marine's own cultural perspectives, including those of the unique Marine Corps culture and those of the Marine's family and upbringing, in order to avoid pitfalls like mirror imaging and emotional empathy. Skills include nonverbal communication skills and general interpersonal skills such as self-regulation, which collectively have been shown to impact outcomes more than actual knowledge of the local language.³⁴ Affect, or attitudes, are potentially the most difficult to shape but are critical to operational success; sometimes described as cultural sensitivity, productive attitudes will enable the application of intellectual rigor to operationally relevant cultural factors without emotional barriers or moral judgments.

This examination of culture-specific studies, related language studies, and development of cross-cultural competency with its component knowledge, skills, and affects makes it clear that training culturally useful Marines will take sustained effort over time. What Marines really need in the way of culture, then, is a career-long learning process, interwoven into existing schools, curricula, and unit training programs. Such a process would develop baseline culture-specific capabilities and make Marines adaptive enough to operate in the broad range of cultures they may encounter.

Question 2: Which Marines really need it?

An increased cultural capability is needed throughout the Marine Corps, both as a practical matter and because it has been directed for all of the Services. It is impossible

to identify, well in advance, those Marines who will need to function in a cross-cultural environment during the course of their careers. The large number of individual augments and units assigned to secondary missions in OIF and OEF demonstrates that Marines from any MOS may find themselves interacting with locals, conducting training or operations with security forces in a host nation, or performing functions that were once associated mainly with civil affairs. Additionally, DoD guidance directs the development of “training programs for the Total Force,”³⁵ or the GPF. The ability to function in a foreign culture cannot be relegated to specialized units or occupational fields; as every Marine must be able to serve as a rifleman, every Marine must also be what Hancock calls “culturally useful.”³⁶

Although every Marine will have to acquire and apply culture-related knowledge and skills, this is not to suggest that every Marine should develop the *same* knowledge and skills. As a general rule, senior officers (who tend to be more heavily involved in planning and campaign design) will need to have a view of a subject culture that is broader in scope and has a longer time horizon. Junior Marines, on the other hand, are more likely to have close personal interactions and build relationships with indigenous people or foreign militaries.³⁷

This division is neither absolute nor clearly defined. A captain may participate in an OPT, requiring a more operational or strategic view of the culture; a colonel’s job may depend on developing personal relationships with his coalition peers and local political, military, and religious leaders. Marine colonels thirty years from now, who today have not yet graduated from TBS, will have achieved both types of cultural usefulness—

tactical and operational—by virtue of their progression through a cultural training and education continuum that they will begin as lieutenants.³⁸

The answer to the second question, then, is that *all* Marines need improved cultural capabilities but the type of capabilities and the supporting training and education will vary by rank.

Question 3: Are initiatives other than training and education necessary? If so, which are most critical?

The most obvious changes necessary for understanding and accounting for culture in planning and operations lie within the realm of training and education. That said, changes in any element of the spectrum of doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) often drive changes in other elements.

The different treatment of culture within resident officer training and PME courses in 2009 is indicative of the fact that training and education cannot by itself drive organizational change within the Marine Corps. At roughly the same time in the fall of 2009, captains at EWS, majors at the School of Advanced Warfighting, and lieutenant colonels at Marine Corps War College received introductions to the five dimensions of operational culture, a framework used by CAOCL.³⁹ Lieutenants at TBS received an introductory class on cultural awareness, using a framework with eight cultural factors,⁴⁰ and majors at CSC looked at culture through the lenses of DIME, four instruments of national power (diplomatic, informational, military and economic), and PMESII (political, military, economic, social, infrastructure and information).

The disparity between the courses' frameworks for examining cultural issues in historical case studies and applying cultural understanding to operational planning is

significant in that it points to a lack of commonly-shared concepts regarding culture. The missing link is doctrine, which “provides a conceptual framework for understanding and conducting” various types of activities⁴¹ (i.e. intelligence and logistics) and also provides the “theory and philosophy”⁴² of how the Marine Corps does business. Without doctrine, the various schools will lack authoritative, directive sources for the content and desired outcomes of their curricula. The TBS class, for example, is being rewritten to incorporate the Army’s ASCOPE framework (drawing on the new manual, *Counterinsurgency*) and the five dimensions of operational culture from *Operational Culture for the Warfighter*. The first publication is necessarily intended only to address COIN, a subset of IW, not to provide broader guidance regarding the role of culture in all military operations; the second is a self-described educational text⁴³.

Other necessary changes for the institutionalizing of culture across the DOTMLPF spectrum may include: facilities for conducting culture-related training, including video teleconferencing (VTC) to connect virtual communities of Marines assigned to each region, and classrooms at PME institutions to facilitate language training; organizational changes, including implementation of the Security Cooperation Marine Air Ground Task Force (SC MAGTF)⁴⁴ concept to align more efficiently regional studies and regional deployments; and personnel, with requirements for additional experts (predominantly civilians) to conduct courseware development, program analysis, and outreach to civilian institutions for continued improvement and sustainment of cultural programs. Other personnel changes will include revision of assignment policies and use of individual augments to provide supported commanders with cultural capabilities matched to assigned missions;

Of these requirements, the two most critical are developing of doctrine to provide top-down guidance and shared mental models, and hiring and retention of social scientists and regional experts to support the growth and sustainment of Marine Corps culture initiatives.

(4) To what extent have the requirements identified above already been met, and what are the critical remaining shortfalls?

The requirements outlined in the discussion of question (1) are only beginning to be systematically addressed through training and education. Marines are being introduced to culture and language primarily through PTP and deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan; that learning is necessarily reactive and culture-specific. Introductory classes at TBS and EWS are a start, and the CIAO course and language training at CSC can serve as elements of a coherent culture program. Existing training and education programs are not sufficiently consistent, cover neither culture-specific studies nor culture-general concepts in adequate detail, and do not span the total force in a coherent way. With the exception of those elements of officer PME mentioned above, most of this requirement constitutes an existing shortfall. The Career Marine Regional Studies program, mentioned in *The Long War*, has not been fully implemented but represents an early effort to gain momentum toward filling that shortfall.

On a more positive note, the Marine Corps has clearly identified that culture and language programs will be oriented primarily on the GPF, ensuring that Marines and commanders have the requisite flexibility to prevail in an uncertain future. As noted earlier, however, plans and programs must move from the conceptual realm to reality.

In answering question (3), doctrine and subject matter expertise emerged as the two critical requirements. Subject matter expertise, largely in the form of civilian social scientists, exists within CAOCL, MCIA, MCIOC, and MCU. As the Marine Corps implements a large-scale training and education effort which will require a large volume of high-quality, specialized courseware, forms of instruction unfamiliar to many Marines, and rigorous analysis to ensure the efficacy of the program, a significant increase in subject matter expertise will be necessary. The civilian social scientists currently working for the Marine Corps are already task-saturated and are therefore unable to meet those expanded requirements. These social scientists also provide an important function by collaborating informally in the absence of formal mechanisms and forums for maximizing the use of their culture-related expertise beyond supporting the immediate needs of their parent organizations.⁴⁵

Lack of doctrine stands out as the single most important obstacle to implementing a coherent and effective approach to culture which can be supported by initiatives across the DOTMLPF spectrum. Simply put, the Marine Corps as an institution has not codified how it is going to think about and operationalize culture. Despite individual initiatives and statements of support for increased culture and language capabilities, documented top-down guidance is necessary to focus and harmonize elements of a paradigm shift within an organization with more than 200,000 members.

IV: Recommendations

Meeting the requirements outlined above, will require significant and focused efforts throughout the Marine Corps. In order to make the Marine Corps approach to culture coherent and effective, the following actions are recommended:

- Adopt the CAOCL-proposed framework of operational culture and its five dimensions. Although there are alternative frameworks and potential room for improvement, the operational culture framework is adequate, has been introduced to Marines in several venues, and can provide the conceptual basis and definitions for other steps.
- Publish high-level doctrine in a Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) to communicate an overarching philosophy of the role culture plays in planning and warfighting, across the warfighting functions and the range of military operations. This MCDP must be general enough to remain valid if the underlying framework of operational culture is modified as the Marine Corps gains institutional experience with the increased emphasis on culture.
- Publish additional doctrine in a Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) to codify those elements of operational culture, as described in *Operational Culture for the Warfighter*, which can serve as the basis for tactics, techniques, and procedures.
- Upon approval of the culture MCDP and MCWP, incorporate culture into existing doctrine. Identify those in which culture needs to be addressed immediately, including but not limited to: *Marine Corps Planning Process* (MCWP 5-1), *MAGTF Information Operations* (MCWP 3-40.4), and *MAGTF Civil Affairs* (MCWP 3-33.1) For doctrinal publications which do not fall into this category, introduce relevant elements of operational culture where appropriate during normal periodic reviews of the publications.
- Approve and implement CAOCL's proposed Regional, Culture and Language Familiarization (RCLF) program. Drawing on the concepts included in *Operational Culture for the Warfighter*, the RCLF as proposed is substantially supported by the available research and constitutes the 80% solution which is better implemented now rather than waiting for lengthy analysis to optimize it.
- Conduct a task and manpower analysis for CAOCL, TECOM, and PME schools to identify the subject matter expertise required to support: (1) the rigorous analysis that will be needed to validate and improve the culture program and its components; and (2) a high, sustained level of outreach to other governmental and non-governmental organizations for expert recommendations on courseware content.
- Establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between MCIOC and MCIA to clearly delineate responsibilities for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating culture-related information. In accordance with the CAOCL charter, the MOU should support a cooperative relationship but must address issues including which organization has primary responsibility for cultural information on organizations, social groupings, and groups which are not part of the enemy order of battle.

- Similarly, establish an MOU between MCIA and the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned to delineate responsibilities for providing the feedback loop that will drive improvements to the RCLF and other culture-related initiatives.
- To the maximum extent possible, leverage DoD and other external funding for production of culture-related products irrespective of which Marine Corps organization was responsible for the authoring a product. For example, MCIA may have access to DIA funding to produce laminated reference guides for which CAOCL was the lead agency. Parochialism must not inhibit the most efficient use of limited resources.
- Add culture-related readings to the Commandant's Reading List in a systematic way. As with the current list, readings should be assigned to appropriate grade levels; if issues of intellectual property can be overcome, providing *portions* of some texts may serve as introductions to complex areas of study to junior Marines and officers who will read the entire work later in their study continuum.
- Within the culture-general component of the RCLF, include readings to address issues such as sources of conflict, social structures, and challenges of cross-cultural interactions. Examples include Hofstede's and Hall's works on culture, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's "six questions" approach in *Variations in Value Orientations*, and Lenski's *Power and Privilege*. At a more basic level, *The Ugly American* can fill a role similar to that of *Rifleman Dodd*—encouraging thought and discussion, while remaining accessible (even entertaining) enough to gain and hold the attention of Marines and officers who are just starting their career-long regional and cultural studies. Specific learning objectives should include an ability to recognize and avoid ethnocentric perceptions, mirror imaging, and overgeneralization (transference) between cultures.
- Include culture-specific reading lists, with required and supplementary texts, to complement each region's associated courseware and stimulate learners' interest in their assigned regions.
- For readings on the Commandant's Reading List and those within RCLF curricula, ensure subject matter experts provide explanatory material that provides context for the readings, including why each reading was chosen, how it fits into the overall approach to culture, and any of the pitfalls that may result from too narrow an interpretation or application of the reading.⁴⁶
- Increase resourcing of CAOCL, including military construction for a permanent facility. In 2006, one observer described CAOCL as "so new it's in a trailer by the railroad tracks."⁴⁷ The organization now occupies two trailers by those tracks with planned addition of two single-wide annexes. The facilities an organization occupies do not determine the organization's success or failure or, necessarily, its longevity; increased and visible investment in CAOCL, with its central role in the Marine Corps' increased emphasis on culture, would help attract subject matter

experts who will be crucial to the endeavor's success; it would also signal Marines and external customers that the Marine Corps is serious about this effort.

- Continue foreign language training at CSC. Recognizing the recommendations of the 2006 "Wilhelm Report," this training serves three purposes: it serves as a placeholder for the elements of the RCLF which will be incorporated at CSC; it demonstrates the Marine Corps' emphasis on cultural skills and their utility in an operational environment, complementary to the sorts of knowledge useful in planning; and it provides students an opportunity to acquire language skills which will be personally and/or professionally beneficial.

Conclusion

In the past seven years, the Marine Corps has drawn on its IW and expanded individual Marines' ability to interact with the indigenous people who are the lynchpin of counterinsurgency. Starting from a baseline of reactive and superficial treatments of language and culture, the Marine Corps is forming an approach to culture which is proactive, broader in scope, and less simplistic. The Marine Corps must do more to clearly outline that approach, implement initiatives across the DOTMLPF spectrum to translate theories and concepts into capabilities throughout the GPF, and better prepare Marines to plan and execute operations with, among, and against people of diverse cultures who are an important part of the security environment.

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